

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

290956Z Sep 03

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001890

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/OCS/ACS/NESA JOHN PETERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: AmCit Trekker Attacked and Robbed on Annapurna Circuit

REF: 02 Kathmandu 2259

[1](#)1. SUMMARY. On Saturday, September 27, 2003, American citizen Sean Gamble called the Embassy reporting that he had been attacked, injured and his passport stolen by a group of four assailants while trekking on the eastern portion of the Annapurna Circuit, near the village of Tal. The attack apparently occurred September 25 or 26. Information on the incident is sketchy as his telephone call was interrupted and contact with Gamble has not yet been re-established. Apparently suffering only minor injuries, Mr. Gamble appears to be continuing with his trek as planned. One of the robbers, carrying Maoist pamphlets, has been arrested and has confessed. As the trekking season begins, the Embassy is beginning to receive new reports of Maoist extortion of foreign trekkers, even on some of the popular, well-traveled trekking routes. ConsChief recently hosted Consuls from the British, Australian, Japanese, French, German and Israeli embassies to discuss and exchange information on alleged Maoist extortion incidents and other security concerns on popular trekking routes. Post's Emergency Action Committee will meet tomorrow to discuss this incident, as well as reports of alleged Maoist extortion, threats and an alleged recent attack on a French trekker. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. American Sean Joseph GAMBLE (DOB: Feb. 5, 1974, PPT #: 084223172) contacted Post One by telephone on Saturday, September 27 to report that he had been attacked and robbed on the eastern portion of the Annapurna Circuit. Gamble stated several assailants attacked him in a wooded section of trail near the village of Tal. He was beaten with a stick, suffered a gash on his head, and he was treated by an Israeli doctor (presumably also trekking in the area) in Dharapani. The attackers rifled through his backpack stealing among other items, his U.S. passport. It is unclear if the attacks occurred September 25 or 26. Mr. Gamble has not signed a Privacy Act waiver.

[1](#)3. Information on the attack is sketchy because the telcon was lost shortly after Post One transferred the call to ConOff and we have yet been unable to re-establish direct contact. Our police contacts have informed us that one of the robbers has been arrested in the case. He is 17 years old and not a resident of the area. The boy was found with Maoist leaflets in his possession and reportedly has confessed to the assault. Reportedly, villagers of the area assisted local police in tracking down the boy. Post has also asked the Himalayan Rescue Association, which has a high altitude health post in Manang, to keep an eye out for Mr. Gamble and to have him re-contact us immediately via their satellite phone if he comes through Manang.

[1](#)4. We have not yet confirmed that the attacks were Maoist or if Mr. Gamble was attacked because he is an American citizen. However, with the beginning of the Fall trekking season, reports are surfacing of Maoist extortion of trekkers. On most occasions, Maoists reportedly have demanded 1000 NRs. (USD 13.50) per trekker and on occasion have issued receipts. There are also scattered reports of a few trekkers being interrogated during Maoist encounters about their nationality and conveying verbal anti-American threats to trekkers of other nationalities.

[1](#)5. Consuls from the British, German, Australian, French, Japanese and Israeli embassies met Friday, September 19 on ConsChief's invitation to exchange information concerning the preliminary reports of Maoist encounters received to date. We called the meeting after receiving second-hand e-mail reports written by British and Canadian trekkers, of a French trekker with head gash who had been beaten by Maoists in the Poon Hill area after reportedly refusing to pay the Maoist extortion demands. We have established an e-mail distribution list with counterpart embassies to facilitate regular information sharing about alleged security incidents on trekking routes and will maintain a database of reported Maoist

robberies and assaults and other trail security incidents.

16. Post plans to hold an EAC meeting tomorrow to review trekking security issues (particularly in the Annapurna area), and to discuss possible changes to Nepal's public announcement language in light of recently reported incidents.

Malinowski